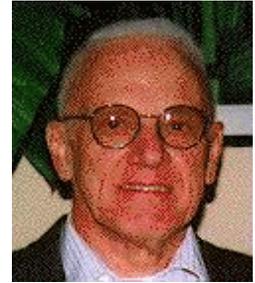


Medicine in Genealogy

Genetics & Your Health

Dr. Richard M. Dick Alford, President, AAFA #0633



Dr. Richard M. "Dick" Alford, got his medical training at the University of Michigan and finished his internship just in time to go into the Navy during the Korean war. After the war he practiced medicine in Chicago for 14 years before moving to Lewiston, ID. He worked with a group there until 1985 when, with four others, started a medical facility of their own where he stayed until he retired. - Editors

A new area of coverage will begin with this issue called *Medicine in Genealogy*. A couple of topics have been chosen as of now, but if you have a topic that you would like covered or information about the subject that you would like to have published, send it along to AAFA, POB 1586, Florissant, MO 63031 for consideration.

The topic in this issue is about genetics in genealogy in the form of a book review of a recently published text written by one of our members. It is *Genetics & Your Health: A Guide for the 21st Century Family*, written by Raye Lynn Alford, Ph.D. AAFA #1093. [See her lineage and welcome as a new member on page 13] It is a book that she has written to assist today's families understand the implications of our genetic material and how abnormalities of that material may affect our lives now and in the future.

In the book she discusses what is involved in genetics; what are DNA, chromosomes, genes and mitochondria and their composition. There is an excellent discussion of the fact that all of our cells have forty-six chromosomes, but our germ cells, the egg in the female and sperm cell in the male, have only twenty-three chromosomes, why and how they grow into a human being when merged. She discusses the many ways in which the chromosomes may vary and result in minimal abnormalities or abnormalities incompatible with life, diseases that are carried only by the male and only by the female. The other genetic components are likewise clearly discussed.

She also discusses briefly some of the more common genetic diseases that we have all heard about over the years, such as Down's Syndrome, phenylketonuria (PKU) and Marfan Syndrome, a genetic disease that many feel accounted for Abraham Lincoln's tall, gangling stature.

Also discussed is what is involved in genetic testing, something that has evolved from essentially nothing fifty years ago, when I graduated from medical school, to a vast array of sophisticated instrumentation today. They are now able to see individual genes on our chromosomes and measure their chemical and enzyme output.

The human genome project is covered, a study funded by the government that is attempting to discover the function of each and every gene and its location on each chromosome. Once this is known, they hope to be able to develop genetic treatments for many diseases that are felt to be of genetic origin, such as diabetes.

There is also a discussion of who should consider being tested for possible genetic abnormalities and some of the potential adverse legal and medical implications that might arise as a result of widespread testing.

I found it to be an excellent discussion of genetics, a source of information for those families that might be dealing with such abnormalities in their family or where a suspected genetic abnormality may present. It is a rather technical book that will require study by the average layman.

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AAFA purchased a copy of the book which will soon be in the AAFA library.

Those interested in having their own copy of the book may order *Genetics & Your Health: A Guide for the 21st Century Family*: Medford Press (609) 654-6500 - Fax (609) 654-4306 - e-mail patp@plexuspub.com or write order department, Plexus Publishing, Inc., 143 Old Marlton Pike, Medford, NJ 08055, \$19.95 each for softbound or \$29.95 each hardbound. Add \$3.00 shipping and handling for each book.